

An Ancient Letter. Journey to this section a century ago.

Story of a journey into the wilderness of that time, Central New York, is told in a letter 104 years old in the possession of Mrs. J. M. Swartwood of Watkins. The letter was written by Benjamin Close, great-grandfather of Mrs. Swartwood. He had been a Revolutionary soldier and after the close of the war took up a soldier's claim now located in the town of Genoa, Cayuga County. The story of his pioneer journey into the wilderness is told in a letter written to his wife May 22, 1793. Mr. Close lived upon the farm until his death. Mrs. Swartwood's grandfather and mother also lived there and the place is still in possession of the family. (It is sold out of the family now, 1906.)

The letter which follows was written at Milton, which is now the town of Genoa, and the Mr. Barber mentioned lived at Aurora. The wife joined her husband in September of the same year 1793 with their four children. (Henry Mead, Benjamin, Deborah and Samuel) the youngest of whom, an infant, she carried on horseback all the way from Greenwich Conn. (copied from a newspaper clipping. The letter follows but this is copied from a copy of the original made by Deborah Close Stevens of Beaver Dam Wis. Mrs. Stevens says she copied it just as it was mistakes and all.)

Milton, May 22nd Day A D 1793

Dear and Loving Wife I take this Opportunity to let you know that I am well at the present thanks be to God for it and I hope these few lines will find you and my little ones so and I must inform you that we got on to our Land the 6th day of May through a long and Tedious Journey. the Roads being very muddy which made it very tedious though we made out to Drive about 10 miles per Day. but when we got to Cortwrite a Place so called I was taken very onwell I was taken about 10 o'clock at Night and held me while Next morning about Six or 7 o'clock with a very extream vomiting which was the worst Sickness I ever had in

my life then it turned the other way which left me very weak and no stomach to eat for two or three days but through the tender mercy of almighty God I was enabled to travel with the team but you must needs think it cost me a great Deal of money being so long upon the Road. I something expect by Horse Waggons that Passed by us that we might travel twenty or 25 miles per day with a Horse waggon. our team at last got very much beat out and suffered very much for the want of Keeping. I was obliged to by Ric Peas and meal to give to my Beast and at last I was obliged to take a very ^{large} load on my Beast another on my Back and go on which I went 18 miles through the wilderness to a House in which time I never saw man nor Beast, except my mare and Dog and then Return to help the others on in which time Daniel and Squire had left us. My little mare was very much beat out but she not so much as the oxen for one of Jonathans the last day lay down in the Yoke and could not go no further and they was obliged to yoke the two near oxen together they being the stoutest to compleat the Journey but all arrived safe there without any further damage than what I have endeavored to Relate to you

Thanks be to the Lord for his kind Providence over us on our Journey and I pray that he will go on in ways of Mercy with us. And I must further inform you that after we got on to the Land we was obliged to help Nathan Build him a House which took us some time so that we never got our Land Laid out till the 13th Day of the month and the 14th Squire went to work and Daniel and I went off to get our Deeds it being about 10 miles there we found one of your former Neighbors Mr Barber which appeared to be very happy to see us ordered a very Good Dinner to be Got for us and further he gave us Great satisfaction in the Principals of Religion and said when we came away that if we went to Horseneck before we see him again we must give his Respects to his ~~old Respects to his~~ old Mistress and to all his old friends and further we find our Land to be very Good well watered and I think there

is no Difficulty in Getting a Good Living here after one year and I will inform you that I have Planted some Potatoes Beans Cucumber Squases Puncons Watermillions I have got a good Gaardian Cleared and have begun to clear summerfallow. I shall not Plant much corn it being so late I shall not have time to Get the Timber of further I will inform you that there is a very Great Plent^y of Peaches where Mr Barbat lives and some apples our Nearest Neighbor is about one mile off ~~a~~ to be a Religious man as we staid there while we was Building Jonathan's House There appears to be nothing wanting but a meeting and that I hope we shall be able to have in a little time and so no more at the Present but my Kind and affectionate love to you and my little ones and the Lord be Pleased to Dwell with you and support you under every difficulty and Trial that shall be Laid upon you and give my Duty to ^{my} mother in Law my Respects to my Brothers and Sisters and all enquiring friends.

Benjamin Close.

I must add somethnig further I must inform you that Daniel being so on well causes me some trouble and difficulty I suppose his lying out a Nights caused it his lying on the Ground has taken a Great clog and I thought it best as he was unable to do anything for him to Return home.

Benjamin Close.

(Superscription)

To Mrs Sarah Close

Stanwich in Greenwich

Township Fairfield County

and State of Connecticut

ould age and it is a great support and satisfaction to them in the
Decline of life

I must brake of for the present with my particular love to
you and Sarah and your children and my respects to all enquireing
friends Zacheus and Deborah desires to be remembered to you

Hannah Mead

and Sarah
Benjamin Close

(Superscription)

Mr

Benjamin Close

Jenoeah

Wilton, N. H. 18th May A. D. 1797

Dear and Loving Wife I have this opportunity to let you know that I
will at the present stand by and for you and I hope these few lines
will find you and my little ones as well as I hope before you start as yet
as to our land the 5th day of May through a storm and tedious journey.
the roads being very muddy made it very tedious though we made
it by drive about 10 miles to the house where we go to Carter's a
place we called it was taken very small I was taken about 10 o'clock
at night and held by while best working about 11 o'clock with
a very serious vomiting which was the worst sickness I ever had in